

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 107

FL 014 849

TITLE High School Graduation Requirements for Limited English Proficient Students. Revised.

INSTITUTION New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Div. of Compensatory/Bilingual Education.

PUB DATE Jun 84

NOTE 24p.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Certification; Educational Policy; *English (Second Language); *Graduation Requirements; High Schools; *High School Students; *Limited English Speaking; *State Standards; Teacher Qualifications

IDENTIFIERS *New Jersey

ABSTRACT

The document begins by outlining and discussing the issues of English proficiency for graduation and the amount of time needed for appropriate instruction to meet that proficiency level. The history of bilingual instruction in the state and the student population affected by the requirements are described. The requirements for students entering the system before grade 9 and between grades 9 and 12 are outlined, with their rationales. The effective dates for phasing in the new policy, and student requirements under the interim policy, are discussed. Implementation issues such as student and parental notification, required implementation activities, and program expansion at the elementary level, and implications for the certification of bilingual teachers are also examined. In a concluding statement it is emphasized that bilingual education programs must be transitional; that no bilingual programs are to be conducted solely in the native language; and that beginning in 1985 districts will have to present clear evidence to explain why students have not exited from the bilingual program after three years. A glossary of commonly used terms and abbreviations and a question-and-answer section are appended. (MSE)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED253107

FL014849

High School Graduation Requirements for Limited English Proficient Students



SAUL COOPERMAN, COMMISSIONER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NJ State Dept.
of Education

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

MEMBERS
NEW JERSEY STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

S. David Brandt
President

Robert J. Wolfenbarger
Vice President

Maud Dahme

Betty A. Dean

Mateo F. DeCardenas

Anne S. Dillman

James Jones

John T. Klagholz

Ruth H. Mancuso

Gustavo A. Mellander

P. Paul Ricci

Nancy Schaenen

Deborah P. Wolfe

Saul Cooperman
Secretary

T. Edward Hollander
Ex Officio

High School Graduation Requirements for
Limited English Proficient Students

Saul Cooperman
Commissioner of Education

Division of Educational Programs
Arnold Webb
Assistant Commissioner

Division of Compensatory/Bilingual Education
Sylvia Roberts, Director

New Jersey State Department of Education
225 West State Street
CN 500
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Revised June, 1984
(As per Board Resolutions of March 7, 1984
and June 6, 1984)

PTM 300.85

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary.....	i
I. Problem	1
II. Core Issue	1
III. Related Issues	1
IV. Basic Assumptions	1
V. History	2
VI. Students Affected	3
VII. Plan for LEP Students	4
VIII. Rationale for Plan	5
IX. Effective Date of New Policy	6
X. Interim Policy	6
XI. Implementation Issues	7
XII. Implications for the Certification of Bilingual Teachers...	8
XIII. Concluding Statements	8
Glossary	10
Questions and Answers	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today more than 6,000 students of limited English proficiency are enrolled in New Jersey's public high schools. That number is expected to increase over the next several years, because of the continuing flow of refugees and other immigrants entering the country and the state. These entering children come to our schools with little or no knowledge of English. Nevertheless, many of them come to us with highly developed academic skills in their native languages.

The high school graduation requirements and the new, more rigorous state graduation testing program will have considerable impact upon students who enter New Jersey schools late in their school career. They may not have sufficient time in this country to acquire the English language skills needed to pass an advanced test of reading, writing and mathematics administered in English.

This booklet presents the high school graduation requirements policy for limited English proficient students as adopted by the State Board of Education on March 7, 1984. In developing this policy, considerable effort has been made to be fair, yet ensure the integrity of the state-endorsed diploma.

Although the literature on second language acquisition may, at times, appear to be contradictory about the amount of time it takes to acquire proficiency in the new language, all indications are that it takes at least two or three years to function at a basic level in the new language. Studies further indicate that it takes considerably longer to acquire the full command of language skills that is required to take an advanced level, rigorous test administered in the new language.

If these students' skills are to be assessed, some flexibility in the measurement of their academic abilities should be allowed. At the same time, if these students are to be prepared to function in an English-speaking society they must have fluency in the country's dominant language -- English. Therefore:

1. All students entering New Jersey schools prior to ninth grade must meet all graduation requirements in English. These students will have sufficient time to acquire English-language skills and, therefore, should be required to satisfy the graduation requirements in English.
2. For those students of limited English proficiency who enter New Jersey schools in grades nine through 12, the requirements must ensure that they demonstrate fluency in English and mastery of the same reading, writing and mathematics skills as their English-speaking peers. The assessment of these skills should be flexible, since such students will only have been in this country a limited amount of time.

These students must:

- . Meet all credit, curricular and attendance requirements.
- . Take the state graduation test each year when it is regularly administered until they pass.
- . If unable to pass the state graduation test by the end of the 11th grade, they must be further evaluated through the Special Review Assessment where they must:
 - demonstrate mastery of basic skills in the native language and/or English; and
 - pass an English fluency test.

This plan ensures the integrity of the diploma. No student will be able to receive a high school diploma without demonstrating that he or she is fluent in English and has mastered the academic skills needed to function in a technological society. At the same time, the plan allows flexibility in assessing academic skills of students who may not have enough experience in this country to be able to demonstrate their true abilities in English.

On June 6, 1984 the State Board of Education adopted a resolution establishing the graduating class of 1987 (the current 9th grade class) as the first class to be affected by this policy. The board's intent was to allow sufficient time from policy adoption to implementation to permit: parents and students to become familiar with the requirements; the department to complete all of the required implementation activities; and school districts to expand programs at the secondary level.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

I. Problem

Must students of limited English proficiency (LEP) pass the ninth grade statewide test in English to be eligible for the state-endorsed high school diploma?

II. Core Issue

Should the high school diploma be withheld from LEP students if they cannot pass the ninth grade test in English? Should statewide testing to satisfy high school graduation requirements be allowed in other languages? Although LEP students entering New Jersey public schools may have mastery of the basic skills in their native language equal to or in excess of that required by New Jersey statute for high school graduation, they may not be able to pass the statewide test in English.

III. Related Issues

- A. The diploma must uphold a standard of competence if it is to have meaning. High schools are accountable to employers, colleges and the community for the quality of their graduates.
- B. The high school diploma must represent a certain level of English language fluency for the LEP student.
- C. The degree of native literacy among foreign born students varies; some are highly literate, whereas others are illiterate in their native language. The amount of schooling students receive in their native country or their lack of educational background often compound the difficulty of acquiring English and learning the content areas.
- D. It is necessary to allow a reasonable length of time for the student to make the transition to the English language.
- E. Legal issues regarding due notice must be considered.
- F. Tests which measure basic skills are different from those which assess language proficiency.
- G. Implementation issues regarding native language tests must also be considered.

IV. Basic Assumptions

We live in a multiethnic, pluralistic society. People who speak different languages or who represent different cultures can and should live harmoniously. Since English is the dominant

language of the United States, essential components for success in the workplace are the abilities to speak, read, write and listen with fluency in the English language and the mastery of basic academic skills in reading, writing and computation. Therefore:

- All students must demonstrate fluency in the English language in order to graduate from high school.
- All students must demonstrate a mastery of the basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills in order to graduate from high school.
- All students should demonstrate a mastery of the basic reading, writing and mathematics skills in the English language.

V. History

In January, 1975, the legislature passed the Bilingual Education Act which requires all districts to identify students of limited English proficiency and to provide bilingual programs wherever 20 or more students from the same language background are identified. Later that year, the legislature also passed the Thorough and Efficient Education Act which requires all districts to conduct an annual assessment of all students in the basic skills.

In November, 1975, a Task Force on Competency Indicators and Standards was established by the Commissioner of Education at the request of the State Board of Education. In accordance with this group's recommendations, a Bilingual Minimum Standards Committee was established in January, 1977. Its report, issued in June, 1978, contained the recommendation that LEP students be included in the statewide testing program.

Following review of this committee's recommendations, the department made its own recommendations to the state board in December, 1978. The following recommendations were accepted by the board:

- Native language tests in Spanish should be developed which are comparable to the statewide tests for reading and math.
- The procedures established for the development and translation of Spanish basic skills tests should be replicated for other language groups in subsequent years.

Accordingly, the department included in its budget for FY'80 the funds needed to develop the Spanish basic skills tests. The legislature, however, eliminated these funds from the budget requests. As a result, the department was able to translate

the MBS Mathematics Test into Spanish, which was administered only once. The entire MBS testing program in Spanish was not continued because of budget considerations.

In December, 1979, minimum graduation requirements were established by the legislature. As the department drafted the accompanying administrative code and prepared guidelines for the implementation of this law, much internal discussion focused on the graduation test requirements and their impact upon LEP students. In July, 1980, Guidelines For High School Graduation Requirements was published by the department. It stated:

"All bilingual students must pass the graduation requirements tests in English. This English requirement is in keeping with the transition purpose of bilingual programs." (Page 9)

While the high school graduation requirements law demands that all students take the test, the MBS Administrative Code permits districts to exclude LEP students from the testing (NJAC 6:39-1.5(b)):

"Pupils who have been identified as of limited English speaking ability, pursuant to NJAC 6:31-1.1 et seq., shall not be required, but may be permitted, to participate in the testing program. Such pupils shall be identified in accordance with NJAC 6:31-1.9. Upon the development of native language tests, such pupils shall be required to participate in the testing program."

In the spring of 1981, the department advised school districts to use their own discretion in including LEP students in the regular MBS testing program. That is, if students found the tests too frustrating, they could be excluded from the testing program. If, in the opinion of the instructional staff, the student did not have a sufficient mastery of English to understand the test, the student did not have to be tested then, but was tested as soon as feasible between grades 10 and 12. Accordingly, many districts decided not to include LEP students in their MBS testing program, and only 2,000 students were tested out of an estimated total of 6,200 eligible students.

Districts were advised in 1982-83 that LEP students who would graduate in 1985 had to pass the grade nine MBS test as one of their high school graduation requirements. At the same time, the MBS testing code did not require that the test be taken in the ninth grade for this population.

VI. Students Affected

More than 6,000 students of limited English proficiency are in New Jersey's public high schools. That number is expected to rise over the next several years because of the continuing flow of refugees and entrant children who often have little or no

knowledge of English. High school graduation requirements will have considerable impact upon these and other LEP students who may have highly developed academic skills in their native languages, but may not have sufficient time to learn English to pass reading, mathematics and writing tests in English.

In the past several years, the language groups containing the greatest numbers of limited English proficient students are as follows:

Language	Oct. 1979	Oct. 1980	Oct. 1981	Oct. 1982	Growth Rate
	Total	Total	Total	Total	(Percent Change) from 1979 to 1982
Arabic	189	359	543	652	+245%
Chinese	302	364	401	599	+98
French	366	325	467	581	+59
Greek	233	247	273	250	+7
Gujarati	Unknown	258	423	476	NA
Indian	255	245	325	398	+56
Italian	450	367	505	465	+3
Japanese	312	414	477	559	+79
Korean	408	499	626	737	+81
Portuguese	1,744	1,757	2,172	1,972	+13
Spanish	21,248	20,097	25,293	26,861	+26
Vietnamese	Unknown	308	522	564	NA

The availability of bilingual programs does not necessarily coincide with the numbers of students in the various language groups. Therefore, not all LEP students receive either bilingual or English as a second language services. This discrepancy occurs because LEP students of certain groups are not in clusters of 20 or more in any given district, but rather are scattered throughout the state. In addition, approximately 100 other language groups are served in the state's English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

VII. Plan for LEP Students

LEP students who enter New Jersey schools prior to ninth grade will be required to meet all of the statewide high school graduation requirements, including passing the ninth grade statewide test in English. Those LEP students entering prior to ninth grade who are unable to pass the test, but have satisfied all other requirements, will be allowed to go through the 12th grade Special Review Assessment (SRA). This is available to all students who fail the statewide test by the end of the 11th grade. For students entering New Jersey schools prior to ninth grade, the SRA shall not include assessment in the native language. For these students, all aspects of the SRA shall be conducted in the English language.

The SRA is an additional evaluation provided during the 12th year and is based on the Individual Student Improvement Plan (ISIP). The evaluation is conducted by a review panel of three teaching staff members not currently instructing the student who determine whether the student demonstrates knowledge of basic skills (based on performance in coursework, local exams, interviews, credits and other proficiencies). Students who have not satisfied all of the credit, curriculum and attendance requirements to date will not be allowed to go through the SRA.

For students who enter in grades nine through 12, the SRA may include assessment of basic skills in their native language, in English, or in a combination of the two languages. The SRA, whether conducted in the native language or in English, must measure the same skills as the ninth grade statewide test.

For students who enter in grades nine through 12, the SRA should draw upon the bilingual and/or ESL teacher's knowledge about the student's performance and skills level. If there is insufficient student work or other data to draw upon because of a lack of bilingual or ESL programs, then appropriate parts of the graduation test will be translated and administered by an individual proficient in the student's native language. The local school district will be responsible for contacting those persons who will conduct the native language assessment process. The department will be responsible for establishing a resource network and for training test administrators in the SRA process.

All LEP students who enter New Jersey schools in grades nine through 12 will be required to:

- satisfy all credit, curriculum, and attendance requirements;
- take the ninth grade statewide test in English each year when it is regularly administered until they pass.

If these students are unable to pass the graduation test by the end of the 11th grade, they must be further evaluated through the Special Review Assessment where they must:

- demonstrate mastery of basic skills in the native language and/or English; and
- pass an English fluency test.

VIII. Rationale for Plan

Passing the ninth grade statewide test is the primary means of demonstrating proficiency in the basic skills to satisfy the high school graduation requirements. The adopted plan makes it clear that all LEP students who have had the opportunity to become proficient in English by receiving English language instruction for an appropriate number of years will be required to demonstrate mastery of the basic skills in English.

There has been much discussion regarding the length of time needed to become proficient in the English language. Language acquisition research indicates that it takes two to three years in a transitional bilingual program for a student to attain competency in English. It also indicates that an additional two to three years is necessary to become fully proficient in English and to be able to master or perform higher level academic tasks in English. Accordingly, it may take up to five years of English instruction before a student could be expected, or required, to pass a basic skills test in English.

Thus, based upon the research, all students who enter New Jersey public schools prior to the ninth grade will be required to demonstrate attainment of basic skills through either the ninth grade statewide test in English or the SRA in English. Limited English proficient students who enter in grades nine through 12 will also be required to demonstrate mastery of the basic skills through the ninth grade statewide test in English, or through the SRA. Because these students have not had the opportunity to acquire full English language proficiency, and, therefore, cannot be expected to demonstrate their level of basic skills in English, evaluation in a native language may be used as part of the SRA. These students must also demonstrate fluency in English as measured by a test selected by the department. This requirement has been added to ensure that all students who receive a state-endorsed high school diploma are able to listen, speak, read, and write with fluency in the English language.

IX. Effective Date of New Policy

All LEP students must demonstrate their basic skills proficiency according to this policy beginning with the graduating class of 1987. The following calendar illustrates how the testing program for LEP students will be phased in.

83/84	(9) ~~10~~ ~~11~~
84/85	(9) ~~(10)~~ ~~11~~ ~~12~~
85/86	(9) (10) ~~(11)~~ ~~12~~
86/87	(9) (10) (11) ~~12~~

- () = Classes subject to new policy
 = Classes subject to interim policy (described below)
 ↘ = Sequence indicating first class affected by new policy

X. Interim Policy

LEP students subject to the interim policy (see above) must:

- meet all credit, curricula and attendance requirements;
- take the graduation test each year when it is regularly administered until they pass;

- if unable to pass the state graduation test by the end of the 11th grade, must demonstrate basic skills proficiency through methods established by the district.

XI. Implementation Issues

The following is a review of the three major activities that will be undertaken in implementing this policy.

A. Student and Parental Notification

Monitoring of district programs has revealed that the majority of districts have not informed LEP students and their parents in their native language of the more rigorous high school graduation requirements. Few districts have sent formal notification home. Most LEP students are unaware of the new requirements and how they will be affected by them. Training of county and district personnel is essential in order for them to inform the LEP population of the new requirements.

B. Required Implementation Activities

This policy establishes clear testing requirements for LEP students for the first time. The new policy requires the selection of an English fluency test and the setting of a standard level of fluency. This activity, which includes establishing a committee of qualified experts, defining fluency, researching available language proficiency tests, establishing psychometric procedures, preparing a final recommendation for the Commissioner and receiving state board approval will take one year to complete. The estimated completion date is July, 1985.

Planning for the use of the native language in the Special Review Assessment will include establishing a resource of native language tests, a list of native language assessors to aid districts, a training program for assessors, a collection of reading materials, and a network for the exchange of reading materials. The target date for completing most of this work is September, 1986.

C. Expanding Programs at the Secondary Level

Monitoring of local schools has also revealed that few districts have established adequate secondary bilingual and ESL programs. Many bilingual programs do not provide adequate course offerings called for in the graduation requirements. Supportive and remedial secondary bilingual/ESL programs have not been implemented. Upgrading the quality of programs at this level must be a top priority.

The department's implementation plan calls for the review of program plans, student achievement data, teacher certification data, and student exit rate data. Districts that do not have adequate bilingual curricula or whose students are not achieving at a level sufficient to meet the more rigorous graduation requirements will be identified. Once these districts are identified, on-site visits will be conducted to isolate the specific areas of program weakness. These areas will then form the basis for technical assistance efforts.

The development of a research model to identify and disseminate successful bilingual and ESL program practices will also assist in upgrading program quality. Staff will research theoretical approaches to bilingual education, review federal and other investigative research studies of implemented bilingual program designs, select effective practices from successful programs, assess variables which would influence adoption in New Jersey and compile a handbook.

Upon completion of a handbook of successful practices, LEA personnel will be requested to identify programs/schools which have already established successful practices as outlined in the model. Department staff will collect and review these data and prepare a booklet describing successful practices of districts in New Jersey. Training sessions for district personnel on successful practices will be ongoing during the entire project. It is estimated that this aspect of improving the quality of bilingual/ESL programs will be completed by January, 1987.

XII. Implications for the Certification of Bilingual Teachers

In order for this plan to be successful, it is essential that bilingual teachers instruct in English as well as in the native language of the students. Therefore, certification requirements must ensure that these teachers are proficient in both languages. The issue of bilingual education teacher certification will be addressed in the teacher certification plan currently being developed by the department.

XIII. Concluding Statements

To achieve the goal of orderly and rapid transition to the English language, bilingual programs must be truly transitional in nature. They must be designed to enable LEP students to acquire sufficient English language skills to function in English-only classes in no more than three years. The plan for testing described in this paper can only be effective if bilingual classes are truly transitional. Otherwise, LEP students could be in bilingual programs for periods of time well in excess of the required three years. This is clearly not in the

best interests of students, since it is essential that they acquire English language skills as soon as possible. No bilingual programs will have instruction solely in the native language. The department will monitor districts carefully to ensure that all bilingual programs are transitional, that appropriate exit criteria have been established, that exit rates increase proportionately with years in programs, and that most students exit within a three-year period. Beginning in 1985 districts will have to present clear evidence to the department on why all students have not exited from the bilingual program by the end of the third year. The department also will determine whether the programs are meeting the needs of the students or perpetuating program participation beyond a reasonable length of time.

If these goals are to be accomplished, bilingual teachers must be proficient both in the native language and in English. They must be able to instruct students in two languages. Above all, they must focus their efforts on English language instruction so that the transition to English may occur as quickly as possible.

GLOSSARY

English as a second language (ESL) instruction develops English language skills in listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. It focuses on the structure of the language, as well as vocabulary and uses appropriate second language teaching techniques and materials.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written instructional plan for a pupil who has been determined eligible for special education and related services. Based on the particular needs of the pupil and determined by school personnel, parents and pupil, where appropriate, it describes the special education components and approaches to instruction that must be provided.

Individual Student Improvement Plan (ISIP) is a written plan that targets the needs of all students with reading and math problems by outlining an instructional course of action.

Language acquisition is the process of attaining language skills, including listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. This process is developmental and follows a continuum along which various stages of attainment can be identified, including: language competency, language fluency, and language proficiency.

Language competency is the ability to function at a basic level in a new language. It is not full mastery of language skills. The term means the ability to engage in informal conversations and perform basic reading or writing tasks in the new language.

Language fluency means the ability to understand conversational English and to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy, to use vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and school topics, to read material for information and to complete forms and write essays and reports on familiar topics. Language fluency requires more time to attain than language competency.

Language proficiency is defined as the full command of language skills, including proficiency in listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. It includes the ability to perform cognitive tasks in the new language. To attain proficiency in a language requires more time than to attain fluency or competency.

Special review assessment (SRA) is a comprehensive review by a panel of professionals based on multiple factors. The SRA measures the basic skills proficiencies of students in a different way than does the ninth grade statewide test.

Transitional bilingual education programs organize their curriculum and instruction to include English language acquisition, the development of native language literacy skills and subject-matter knowledge and skills through the use of both languages. In transitional programs, students are exited on the basis of attainment of skills sufficient to sustain grade-level academic achievement in the English classroom.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is the difference between language competency, language fluency and language proficiency?

Language competency implies the ability to function at a basic level in a new language, but is not full mastery of language skills. Language fluency means the ability to understand conversational English and to speak the language with sufficient accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in formal and informal conversations, to read material for information, to complete forms and write essays and reports on familiar topics. Language proficiency is the full command of language skills, including listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, and includes the ability to perform cognitive tasks in the new language.

2. How many years does it take for a student to become proficient in English?

Research indicates that three years in a program is adequate and reasonable for the student to become competent in the language. To acquire the skills necessary to be proficient in English, a limited English proficient (LEP) student would need an additional two to three years of instruction.

3. When must LEP students take the required annual assessment test during grades K-8?

All students in the public schools must be assessed yearly in the basic skills.

4. Are districts responsible for providing remedial services in basic skills to LEP students enrolled in a bilingual program?

Yes.

5. Must Individual Student Improvement Plans (ISIPs) be developed for LEP students? When?

Yes, the same as for all other students, starting in the seventh grade.

6. Must districts provide bilingual programs for LEP students?

Yes, if there are 20 or more LEP students of the same language classification.

7. Is the statewide test the only high school graduation requirement for LEP students?

No. All students must also meet the curricular, attendance, credit hour and local district requirements.

8. Why is this policy necessary concerning LEP students and high school graduation requirements?

The past practice of the department was inconsistent. The state board had stated that the minimum basic skills test should be in the students' native language. However, the 1980 Guidelines for High School Graduation Requirements stated that students must pass the basic skills test in English to receive the state-endorsed high school diploma.

9. Do students have to speak English to receive a high school diploma under this new policy?

Yes. They have to read, write, listen and speak at a level that demonstrates English fluency.

10. What are the high school graduation requirements for LEP students who enter New Jersey schools before grade nine?

These students must meet the same requirements as all other (native English speaking) students.

11. What are the high school graduation requirements for LEP students who enter New Jersey schools in grades nine through 12?

These students must meet the curricular, attendance, credit hour and local district requirements, and pass the ninth grade statewide test. If they cannot pass the test by the end of the 11th grade, they must:

- demonstrate basic skills proficiency through the 12th grade Special Review Assessment (SRA). Because these students have not had the full opportunity to acquire English language proficiency, the SRA may be conducted in the native language, English or a combination of both languages, and
- demonstrate on a test selected by the department that they have attained fluency in the English language.

12. What is the effective date of this new policy?

All LEP students must demonstrate their basic skills proficiency according to this policy beginning with the graduating class of 1987.

13. What is the interim policy for LEP students?

LEP students in grades 11 and 12 during 1984-85 and in grade 12 during 1985-86 must:

- meet all credit, curricula and attendance requirements;
- take the graduation test each year when it is regularly administered until they pass;

- if unable to pass the state graduation test by the end of the 11th grade, must demonstrate basic skills proficiency through methods established by the district.

14. What is the grade 12 SRA?

For students who do not pass the ninth grade statewide test by the end of the 11th grade, an additional evaluation, the SRA, must be provided during the 12th year based on the individual student improvement plan. The SRA must be conducted by a review panel of three teaching staff members who are not currently instructing the student. This panel will make a recommendation as to whether the student has demonstrated knowledge of basic skills even though the formal test results do not show mastery. The evidence to be used by this panel shall include, but not be limited to:

- performance on state tests (including all re-tests);
- performance on locally selected examinations;
- performance in coursework;
- formal interview with pupil;
- formal interview with parents;
- formal interview with teaching staff;
- examination of the pupil's transcripts noting the pupil's strengths in other related areas;
- guidance counselor/psychologist review as appropriate;
- visual, auditory and/or medical data as appropriate;
- examination of credit and curriculum performance; and
- examination of pupil proficiencies in other areas.

The panel certifies whether the student has attained the basic skills graduation requirement (see NJAC 6:8-4.2(b)4). For further information review the department's booklet, The Special Review Assessment Process, published in June, 1984.

15. Do all students who fail the ninth grade statewide test in 11th grade go through the SRA?

Yes. However, before entry to the SRA all students must also meet the curricular, attendance, credit hour and local district requirements to date.

16. Does the SRA measure skills equivalent to those in the basic skills test?

Yes. "A recommendation (from the review panel) shall be forwarded on each pupil not meeting statewide basic skills requirements to the county superintendent of schools by March 1 of the regularly scheduled graduation year as to whether the statewide minimum basic skills requirement has been attained satisfactorily" (NJAC 6:8-4.2(b)5). "The panel shall forward a recommendation as to whether the student possesses demonstrable basic skills" ... (Guidelines for High School Graduation Requirements, p.9). The SRA is based on the ISIP which is based on an item analysis of the ninth grade statewide test. The SRA permits students to demonstrate through a means other than the state test that they have mastered the same skills as those measured by the statewide test. The students have to demonstrate, through these other means, that they have skills that would get them to a passing level on the statewide test.

17. How do we ensure the integrity of the SRA?

"On the basis of the evidence (from the review panel)... and the recommendations of the review panel, the building principal, and the district superintendent, the county superintendent may certify satisfactory attainment of the minimum basic skills graduation requirement" (NJAC 6:8-4.2(b)5). "This recommendation (of the review panel) must be endorsed by the building principal, the district superintendent and the county superintendent before the local board of education may award a state endorsed high school diploma to the student" (Guidelines, p. 9).

In summary:

- The LEA must complete the Student SRA Profile for each student and provide documentation.
- The county superintendent will sign off for each student.
- The department will monitor on a random sample basis.

18. How do we ensure consistency, statewide, in the application of standards on the SRA?

Consistency is ensured by the fact that:

- All students must demonstrate mastery of the same skills as those on the ninth grade statewide test.
- The SRA is meant to be flexible with respect to techniques and instruments. The standards/content of the SRA will be the same as those set for the ninth grade statewide test.
- The SRA is based on the ISIP and the skills measured by the ninth grade statewide test, just as it is for all other students.

19. How is the SRA conducted for LEP students who enter in grades nine through 12?

If the SRA (all or part) is in the native language:

- For students in bilingual and/or ESL programs (approximately (5,800 out of 6,351 LEP students in high school)), the bilingual or ESL teacher's knowledge of the student's achievement (classwork, formal tests, translation of parts of the state test when appropriate, etc.) is used.
- For those students for whom there is insufficient knowledge (i.e. students are not in bilingual or ESL programs or have not had enough time for schools to ascertain their achievement), there must be testing with the grade nine statewide test.
 - Appropriate parts of the statewide test should be translated and administered by an individual proficient in the particular language.
 - The local district has the responsibility to contact this individual, while the department will establish a resource network and train the native language assessors.

20. Can the ninth grade statewide test be translated in all three areas (reading, writing, math)?

The math test and the writing sample section of the writing test can be translated. The reading test and the multiple choice section of the writing test cannot be literally translated. The skills measured in the multiple choice section of the writing test can be assessed, however, through parallel items in the native language.

21. How will reading skills be assessed in the native language?

The department will:

- set requirements for reading material to be used in the assessment (level, interest, length);
- establish a network to obtain and exchange the appropriate reading material (from sources such as National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education, foreign ministries of education, other state departments of education, etc.);
- supply questions and scoring criteria to test administrators.

22. How will fluency in English be measured?

The department, through committee process, will select one test to measure English fluency. This selection will be made after a review of the valid and reliable language proficiency tests now available that measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Each test will be analyzed according to set department criteria which include: adequate measure of English fluency, item analysis, reliability, validity, procedures for screening items for gender, cultural, racial and/or ethnic bias, as well as other test criteria.

23. How will a level of English fluency be determined?

Once a test is selected, a uniform standard of English fluency will be recommended by a group of experts. They will use the same procedures as that used for the new statewide testing system. This standard will determine whether or not students have attained the level of English fluency that would make them eligible for the SRA. The State Board of Education, upon recommendation of the Commissioner, will establish the standard.

24. What happens to LEP students who fail the SRA?

All students who fail the SRA can remain in public schools until they reach 20 years of age.

25. Can students who decide to leave school gain a diploma at a later time?

Yes. Although students should be encouraged to stay in school and earn the state-endorsed diploma, those who wish to leave school should be counseled regarding the options of adult high school and high school equivalency programs. These options include the following:

(a) The Spanish and French GED Program

The General Educational Development (GED) tests are administered in five content areas in both Spanish and French. Students must not only pass those tests, but also must pass an English proficiency test before being awarded a high school diploma. (This English test is not required of native English language students.)

The Spanish and French GED tests require that students have basic skills in their native language and a basic knowledge of English which is determined by the English proficiency section of the test assessing reading comprehension. They include multiple choice questions on vocabulary recognition, sentence completion, appropriate response and reading comprehension. The English portion of the test may be less difficult for the ESL student than other standardized communication skills tests. However, the other sections are more sophisticated. Part of the test comprises general knowledge questions in social studies, which require some prior knowledge in this area. Therefore, the GED goes beyond the scope of basic competencies in reading and math.

Students under 18 must obtain a waiver in order to be eligible to take the GED test. This requires the signature of both parents and of the public school principal or superintendent of schools, and also the reason for leaving school. In some districts, few waivers are granted.

On June 6, 1984 the State Board of Education adopted a resolution which would set equivalent standards for the GED tests, High School Proficiency Test and English language fluency requirements.

(b) The 24 College-Credit Equivalency

Students earning 24 college credits (including certain requisite courses) through this program are eligible for a high school equivalency diploma. This option applies to a very limited population. It is only for students entering New Jersey from other areas (such as refugees), who have a high school education from another educational system, but who lack documentation of credentials. Students without the proper educational background would have great difficulty in successfully completing college-level coursework. To receive the high school diploma, students have to pass either the state graduation test or the College Basic Skills Test.

(c) Adult Evening High School

Adult evening high school programs assign high school credit on the basis of life experience competencies, such as work experience, household management experience, etc. Since high school age students have not had a broad range of such life experiences, this option is not really valid for a younger population.

JD/ckb:1/0158h: